

'Oh, no; I feel pretty well to-day.'  
 'I should like to hear it then.'  
 'Perhaps not, as it concerned yourself.'  
 'Concerned me!' exclaimed Edgcomb; 'I am all the more anxious to hear it then.'

'Well,' said Jarmyn, turning himself slightly to one side to obtain a more comfortable position, 'these coats are indeed uncomfortable to one who has been used to sleeping on a hair mattress. What have you been used to sleeping on?'

Edgcomb was so surprised by the question that he betrayed not a little confusion for a moment; but, quickly recovering his wits, he replied: 'The best that circumstances would afford.'

'Well, I started out to tell that dream, but in turning over there came forcible recollections of my hair mattress that I forgot what I was going to say. The dream was so weird, so singular, and made such an impression upon me that I awoke with a start. Everything appeared to be in pantomime, not a syllable being spoken by the actors. It seemed that I was passing along a lonely road in the night. The moon was shining brightly, giving the shadows of the trees by the roadside the appearance of prodigious silhouettes of men. Finally I came to a declivity in the road, where a narrow gorge had been cut through a hill by natural processes. I dreaded to pass through this gorge, but did so, and as I emerged at the foot there seemed to be a small plateau with a mighty lake just beyond. As I stepped upon the plateau a strange sight met my eyes. The moon shining upon the lake silvered the placid waters with a sheen-like lustre. Upon the plateau there were two dark objects engaged in a struggle. Stepping behind a rock which lay at the mouth of the gorge I watched the combat. It was a desperate one, and the combatants kept drawing closer and closer to me. At last I discovered them to be two large and ferocious lions, at which I started to run away, but tripped and fell; but, upon regaining my feet, the two lions seemed to have turned into two men—you know how rapidly dreams will sometimes change in form. Well, I was not so much frightened at the men as I had been at the lions, so I stepped back under cover of the rock again. The struggle continued and they came very close to me. By the light of the moon, which was now shining full in their faces, I saw that one of them was you—only you appeared to have long hair, the other a man with black hair and moustache, about your own age and size.' Then Jarmyn gave an accurate description of Coulter, opining, as he watched the result, that Edgcomb evinced an unusual degree of nervousness. His lips were compressed and it appeared to be an effort for him to maintain composure.

Jarmyn continued: 'The other man, whoever he was, seemed to have the best of it, for you were down and he was on top, trying to strangle you. Then there came a loud peal of thunder and a blinding flash—a queer thing to come from a clear sky, with the moon shining, was it not? But that only shows the absurdity of dreams. The man seemed to loosen his hold at this, and you were quick to take advantage of it. Throwing off your antagonist, you made a dash toward the precipice and jumped into the lake; but you soon reappeared again, and I saw you then, as I see you now, with short hair. Then, seeming to renew the attack yourself, you pushed your antagonist desperately toward a great dark object which stood upon the plateau. I walked toward it with morbid curiosity, and behold, it was a scaffold, with the trap set and the noose suspended, ready to receive the neck of the victim. You fought one another up the steps of the scaffold, and then ensued a most desperate struggle, each trying to force the other's head into the noose. Suddenly I heard a crash; the trap had fallen, and a body was dangling from the scaffold. I saw the victor spring to the ground and run away in the darkness. I could not tell which it was until I approached the scaffold and turned the body toward the moon; then I saw that it was you, and I awoke with a start, the perspiration standing out on my brow.'

The reader will readily surmise that Jarmyn's dream was a myth. A myth

it was, in reality, but the ingenuity and purpose of it are apparent. It was one of his peculiar ways of getting at the truth of a matter, and it had the desired effect, for it was obvious that Edgcomb was in a state of perturbation.

'What's the matter?' asked Jarmyn. 'You appear to be very uneasy about my story.'

'The thought of such horrible dreams makes me shudder,' Edgcomb replied, endeavouring to appear more composed. 'The fact is that a scaffold or anything suggestive of one has always been a hideous subject to my mind.'

'You do not approve of capital punishment then?'

'Not by hanging. No sir; it's simply barbarous. The world has progressed in every respect excepting its methods of execution. In that respect it stands where it did centuries ago. I can conceive of nothing more brutal than execution by hanging. It is so frequently performed in a bungling way, and it is an outrageously inhuman method of punishment.'

'But what plan do you prefer? There must be some way of making the law terrible to the eyes of offenders.'

'If you must have executions, perform them in a more civilised manner, by electricity or even poison. When there are such powerful agencies of death available as hydrocyanic acid, a few drops of which placed upon the tongue will produce death quite as speedily as by a bullet, and much more so than by strangulation, why resort to such methods as hanging? You may terrorise the victim, but what good is accomplished? He does not live to profit by it. If you had a dog or a cat which you wished to dispose of you would never persuade yourself to tie a rope around its neck and draw it up for strangulation. No, sir; you would simply give it a dose of poison. Why should you be more humane to the dog than the man? Those who commit murder are instinctively bad. They have vicious hearts and will commit such acts regardless of consequences. The law can never devise a penalty which will prevent crime. I believe, sir, that some men are born with evil hearts, as some are born with a wonderful talent for music or a marvellous genius for invention. In either case they are abnormal developments, one in a good direction, the other in a bad. The one cannot help becoming a great inventor, and the other cannot help becoming a great criminal. So, as long as the world must be burdened with such creatures, work them off in the easiest way possible, and in that which will be the most humane.'

'I am quite of the opposite opinion,' said Jarmyn, after Stanley had finished his remarks. 'I do not think a criminal deserves one-half the consideration which should be shown to a dog. The latter is an irresponsible unreasoning animal, which does not know right from wrong, while man, being mentally endowed by the Creator, is a responsible creature, and it he takes the life of another he should be disposed of in a manner which will produce a wholesome dread of the law. Why, neighbour, I tell you hanging is too good for some men.'

'You have very radical views, I see,' replied Edgcomb.

'I am unrelenting toward criminals. Society must be protected and the law upheld if the gallows must be worked night and day to do it.'

Jarmyn had become so interested in his argument, that he had raised his head, supporting himself with his elbow, but as this last sentence escaped his lips he sank back upon the pillow thoroughly exhausted. A complete prostration followed, lasting several days, during which Edgcomb was untiring in his attentions to the sick man. Day after day as he sat by his bedside, the singular dream which Jarmyn had related haunted him. Did it portend some calamity, some struggle between Coulter and himself, in which one of them would perish? The gallows! The thought of the gallows caused a shudder to accentuate his anxiety. How strangely the dream had portrayed the reality, for the struggle had commenced in which he or his mortal enemy must triumph. Could it be possible that the man had had such a wonderful dream? Or did he suspect him of being a fugitive, and had he discovered his identity? It was quite improbable that he was a detective, for why should a detective be there with

a genuine case of small-pox simultaneously with himself. There was something inexplicable about it all which caused feelings of doubt and uncertainty to constantly pervade him.

Stanley had been in the hospital five weeks when the doctor pronounced him to be entirely well, and gave him permission to depart, returning the money and papers which he had found in his clothing. Entering the room where Jarmyn was still lying ill, he told him that he had just received his discharge and would be off in the morning. Jarmyn expressed regret; he was loath to lose so agreeable a companion. He was sorry, indeed, but for reasons altogether different from those implied in looks and demeanour. He was sorry that he could not lay his hands upon him and say: 'You are Stanley Edgcomb and I am Jarmyn. Come along with me, for the law claims you and I am the agent of the law.' Much as he had come to regard Edgcomb by the associations of the past few weeks, still duty was paramount to friendship; and there was undoubtedly, too, that secret pride of a faithful dog that stands before its master, wagging its tail, ready to execute some unusual feat at his command. The pride and the desire were apparent, but the ability was lacking. The law was his master; he knew no other; and he was faithful to his master's trust.

Jarmyn lay in bed and watched Edgcomb's movements the rest of the day, and finally, when evening came and the latter went out to take an airing, he called the nurse to his bedside and asked: 'Who is the young fellow that comes in every morning to do the chores?'

'Ah, that's Larry,' the nurse replied. 'Larry, eh? A likely fellow I should say.'

'Likely enough,' answered the nurse, with a coyness which was quite refreshing.

'Well, if he is likely, then in all likelihood you like him,' replied Jarmyn smilingly.

'A like is a likely likelihood when the liker likes the liked,' the nurse replied, in a rather perplexing and decidedly non-committal, philandering tone.

'Very likely,' said Jarmyn, much amused at this alliteration, 'but I should like to ask a favour of Larry.'

'And Larry would like to do it I am sure.'

'In which case I should like to reward him. Do you think that I could trust him to do an errand, and would he do it well? It is something of great importance and extremely confidential.'

'Larry's honest and faithful, and he will do it right, I am sure of that.'

'What is the hour, and can I see him at once?'

'It's a quarter after seven, sir. You can see him this minute if you wish.'

'All right; have him come in at once. I wish to see him alone.'

The nurse disappeared, and a moment later Larry was at the bedside. After imposing the strictest secrecy upon him, Jarmyn proceeded to tell him what he wished him to do: 'After you have thoroughly disinfected

yourself, I wish you to go to the office of the Chief of Police and inquire for him. You must not confide this matter to anyone else, under any circumstances, unless the Chief should be sick or absent from the city, then inquire for Captain Black. If the Chief is not there, then go to his house; you must find him, at all events, and deliver this message to him. I can't write it down; you must remember it. Tell him that Jarmyn—be sure and remember the name—Jarmyn wants him to send two officers who have had the small-pox here at day-light to-morrow morning, to make an arrest; to have them dress in citizen's clothes, and to inquire for the nurse. Do you understand?'

'I do,' replied Larry. 'Very well, then; hurry along and tell the nurse to come back; I desire to see her a minute. Remember and keep a close mouth.'

Larry quietly signified that he needed no cautions and retired.

Edgcomb had been strolling upon the walks around the hospital. He had reached the rear end of the house and turned the corner, when the door opened, and he heard the sound of voices. The doorway was hidden by lattice-work, so that he could plainly hear the conversation without being perceived. The voices were those of a man and a woman—Larry and the nurse. The latter had followed her lover to the steps, and, closing the door behind her, asked: 'What's up, Larry? What are you going to do?'

'Goin' on an errand, Betty. What d'ye suppose?'

'I thought as much, but tell me where and what for?'

'Oh, don't be curious, Betty. I'm going down to the city.'

'But what did the man want of you? There's somethin' very strange about it.'

'Now, Betty, you know more'n I do about it, for he told me to have the two cops come and ask for you.'

'Cops! Cops ask for me? Why, what do you mean, Larry? I'm sure I don't want to have anything to do with the cops.'

'Well, if you don't know, just go in and ask Mr Jarmyn.'

'Mr who?'

'Mr Jarmyn, to be sure; the man you brought me in to see.'

'Why, that's not his name, Larry; his name is Mr Brown.'

'Well, maybe it is, Betty; but that is the name he told me to give to the Chief of Police; and he told me to be sure and remember it.'

'An' it's the Chief of Police you're goin' to see? Oh, I know what he's up to now. He's goin' to have 'em take Mr Smith off to prison. I know it's that, for he was askin' it' so many questions about him the other day. When are the cops comin'?'

'At daylight to-morrow morning. Now, Betty, you must keep still. I promised to keep it to myself, but you wimmin have such a way of making a fellow talk when he oughtn't to. By the way, Mr Jarmyn, or Mr Brown, or whatever his name is, wants to see you right away. You had better go in while I go about me errand. He's goin' to pay me well, so I must hurry away.'

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